



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TWO ASSISTANT U.S. ATTORNEYS RECOGNIZED NATIONALLY FOR SUCCESSFUL “MIRACLE CARS” PROSECUTION

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that two Assistant U.S. Attorneys were recognized by the Executive Office for United States Attorneys today for their successful prosecution of the Miracle Cars case, which involved a multi-million dollar fraud scheme based on the sale of thousands of non-existent vehicles nationwide.

Supervisory Assistant U.S. Attorney J. Daniel Stewart and Assistant U.S. Attorney James Curt Bohling attended the 21st Annual Executive Office for United States Attorney’s Director’s Awards Ceremony today and were recognized and each presented a Director’s Award.

The Department of Justice conducted the ceremony in Washington, D.C., in which 224 award recipients received recognition for their excellence in law enforcement. Recipients include Assistant U.S. Attorneys, litigation and information technology support personnel, as well as others who have made outstanding contributions in federal, state and local law enforcement.

Stewart and Bohling both received Director’s Awards for their prosecution of four defendants in the “Miracle Cars” scheme, a nationwide conspiracy that defrauded thousands of victims out of millions of dollars. Co-defendants in the case included Robert Gomez and James Nichols, both of California, Gwendolyn Baker of Memphis, Tenn., and Corinne Conway of Higginsville, Mo. The scheme targeted religious groups by promising bargain-priced vehicles as a reward for religious faith. Purchasers of the automobiles were told a wealthy individual had left a multi-million dollar estate with a large number of vehicles to be sold at bargain prices. In reality, there was no estate and there were no vehicles. The scheme raised more than \$20 million from thousands of individuals throughout the United States from 1998 to 2002.

“Stewart and Bohling spent long hours working on the ‘Miracle Cars’ case, which received nationwide media interest,” Graves said. “These prosecutors’ outstanding litigative skills resulted in justice for thousands of victims. All four defendants were convicted and the two

main defendants received sentences in excess of 20 years.”

Attorney General John Ashcroft recognized the hard work of all of those who received awards at the event.

“I commend all of the award recipients for their extraordinary accomplishments,” Ashcroft said. “You have made a difference that has expanded the freedom of the American people – giving them freedom from terrorism, freedom from crime, freedom from the dependency of drugs and freedom from dishonesty and deception in our financial markets. Your work, your lives, and your actions have changed lives for the better, ensuring that every American is equal under the law and protected by the United States Constitution.”

“These awards recognize the impressive achievements of 224 of the nation’s finest public servants,” said Mary Beth Buchanan, Director of the Executive Office for United States Attorneys. “They are the prosecutors, secretaries, paralegals, IT specialists, officers, agents and others whose hard work makes our nation safer and our system of justice stronger.”

Working together, the nation’s law enforcement and justice community have:

- * Driven the violent crime rate to its lowest level in 30 years;
- * Increased gun-crime prosecutions by 68 percent in just three years – and as a consequence, over the past three years the number of gun crimes has decreased by more than 250,000;
- * Charged more than 900 violators in more than 400 cases since the inception of the Corporate Fraud Task Force. To date, more than 500 individuals have been convicted, including the prosecution of top executives whom have been shown do not stand above the law;
- * Dismantled 14 major drug-trafficking networks and seriously disrupted eight more over the past two years alone;
- * Stopped human trafficking. In the fiscal years of 2001 to 2003, 210 new human-trafficking investigations were opened. That is double the number of the previous three years;
- * Charged 439 individuals for criminal civil rights violations over the past three fiscal years. This is more than were charged during the preceding three years; and
- * Obtained the single largest civil penalty in history against a single company for violations of an environmental statute. Through tough enforcement of the Clean Air Act, a reduction in air pollution of over 465,000 tons per year has been achieved. And courts imposed more than \$179 million in civil penalties for violations in environmental cases, second only to fiscal year 2003's record-setting

recovery of \$203 million.

The Executive Office for United States Attorneys provides oversight, general executive assistance and direction to the 93 United States Attorney's Offices around the country.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at
www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow